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C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 003575

SIPDIS

FOR EUR/WE (CEFKIN); DRL/IRF (FARR)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/19/2012

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [CH](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: VATICAN COMMENTS ON IRF BEIJING VISIT

REF: FARR/HARDT EMAIL OF 07/18/02

CLASSIFIED BY: CHARGE D. BRENT HARDT FOR REASONS E.O.12958 1.5 (B), (D)

1. (C) IN THE ABSENCE OF ARCHBISHOP CLAUDIO MARIA CELLI, THE VATICAN'S MAIN CHINA HAND, POLOFFS ON 07/19 MET TO DISCUSS REFEMAIL POINTS WITH VATICAN CHINA DESKOFF, MSGR. GIANFRANCO ROTA-GRAZIOSI. ROTA-GRAZIOSI RECOMMENDED THREE POSSIBLE APPROACHES FOR AMBASSADOR HANFORD TO PUT FORWARD TO HELP UNBLOCK PRC/HOLY SEE DIALOGUE DURING HIS UPCOMING TRIP
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TO BEIJING. AVERRING THAT NOT MUCH WILL HAPPEN BEFORE THE CCP PARTY CONFERENCE IN OCTOBER, ROTA-GRAZIOSI SEEMED RESIGNED TO THE LIKELIHOOD THAT YEARS WOULD PASS BEFORE PRC/HOLY SEE DIALOGUE WOULD BEAR FRUIT. HE HELD LITTLE HOPE THAT BEIJING COULD BE PERSUADED OFFICIALLY TO REOPEN DIALOGUE WITH THE HOLY SEE, MUCH LESS TO CONCLUDE A SINO-VATICAN AGREEMENT BEFORE PRC PRESIDENT JIANG VISITS THE U.S. IN THE FALL.

2. (C) ROTA-GRAZIOSI WAS CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC, HOWEVER, ON THREE LIMITED STEPS THAT THE DRL/IRF DELEGATION MIGHT URGE THE PRC TO TAKE DURING THE DRL/IRF LATE JULY VISIT TO BEIJING. FOR EXAMPLE THE PRC MIGHT HOST AN OFFICIAL DELEGATION FROM THE HOLY SEE. HE SAID THAT THE HOLY SEE HAS PROPOSED ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS TO THE PRC THAT AN ENVOY BE ALLOWED TO MAKE AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO CHINA TO TRAVEL TO VARIOUS DIOCESES AND HOLD MEETINGS WITH CLERGY FROM BOTH THE OFFICIAL CHURCH AND THE UNDERGROUND CHURCH. IN THE PAST, CARDINAL ETCHEGARRAY HAS VISITED, BUT ONLY AS A "PRIVATE PERSON." HE MUSED THAT AN OFFICIAL HOLY SEE VISITOR COULD BE EITHER CARDINAL OR BISHOP RANK, AND MIGHT EVEN CELEBRATE A MASS AT A CHINESE OFFICIAL CATHEDRAL "AS A MARK OF SOLIDARITY." ROTA-GRAZIOSI BELIEVED A LESS HIGH-PROFILE MOVE MIGHT BE PRC SUPPORT FOR WHAT THE POPE HAS CALLED A "CULTURAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND CHINA," ROTA-GRAZIOSI SAID THE HOLY SEE WOULD BE HAPPY TO COLLABORATE WITH BEIJING ON SOMETHING LIKE AN ART SHOW OF VATICAN MUSEUM PIECES, OR, MORE AMBITIOUSLY, A SYMPOSIUM TO DISCUSS VATICAN/CHINESE HISTORY. HE DID UNDERSCORE THAT IN THE PAST THE PRC HAD REFUSED TO ACCEPT EVEN A SINGLE WORK OF ART FROM THE VATICAN MUSEUM AS PART OF ANOTHER ART SHOW. FINALLY, HE NOTED THAT IT WOULD
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CERTAINLY HELP FOR THE U.S. DELEGATION TO URGE THE PRC TO REOPEN ITS DIALOGUE WITH THE HOLY SEE, WHICH COULD START EVEN VIA INFORMAL INTERMEDIARIES SUCH AS THE U.S., ITALY, SPAIN, GERMANY, OR OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES.

3. (C) COMMENT: ROTA-GRAZIOSI WAS SPEAKING FOR HIMSELF AND, CHARACTERISTICALLY CAUTIOUS AS A VATICAN OFFICIAL, WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT COMFORTABLE "BRAINSTORMING" FOR POLOFFS. IT IS NOT CERTAIN THAT ARCHBISHOP CELLI WOULD ENDORSE ANY OR ALL OF THESE IDEAS, SAVE THE LAST POINT. THE HOLY SEE HAS CONSISTANTLY EXPRESSED ITS APPRECIATION TO US FOR THE WORK OF DRL/IRF AND FOR THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL INTERVENTIONS ON THIS ISSUE IN BEIJING.
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